DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 054 520 EA 003 621

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TITLE Education's Time for Success.
PUB DATE 2 Apr 71
NOTE 15p.; Speech given at Education Commission of the States and Education Writers Association Joint Meeting. (Chicago, Illinois, April 2, 1971)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Civil Rights; *Educational Improvement; Educational Research; Experimental Schools; *Federal Aid; Higher Education; *Integration Methods; Minority Groups; Research Needs; *School Integration; Speeches
IDENTIFIERS Educational Reform; *National Institute of Education; Revenue Sharing

ABSTRACT

This speech presents the programs of the Nixon Administration and of the Office of Education designed to enhance educational progress. The programs covered include (1) desegregation efforts in the eleven Southern States and actions to protect the rights of other minority children, (2) the Administration's Education Special Revenue Sharing Bill, (3) the proposed National Institute of Education, and (4) the pending Higher Education Opportunity Act. (JF)

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EDUCATION'S TIME FOR SUCCESS*

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A few weeks after assuming the office of Commissioner, I read a well-informed but somewhat depressing magazine article describing my new job. The author tendered me, in Disraeli's phrase, congratulatory regrets.

He found the Office of Education a troubled place, generally ineffective, and tied down by the threads of a thousand conflicting interests -- a bureaucratic Gulliver supine in the lowlands of the Potomac.

Noting with some sympathy that I was the new man in O.E., the piece went on to explore a long, intimidating list of problems that I was inheriting -- staff vacancies, limited discretionary funds, anemic research program, to name but a few.

"All in all," it summed up "the weight of problems facing the new Commissioner is such as to discourage all but fools and courageous men."

I didn't know whether to consider myself flattered or insulted. The writer didn't specify. Perhaps he hadn't made up his mind.

But for whatever it reveals about me, either my foolishness or my courage, I want you to know that I am far from discouraged by what I have found at the Office of Education. In fact, I would describe myself as very favorably impressed by the quality of the organization, by its positive reaction to my engagement there, and especially by the good things

*Before Joint Meeting of the Education Commission of the States and the Education Writers Association, Marriott Hotel, Chicago, Illinois, Friday April 2, 1971, 7:00 p.m.

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that are in motion in the Office, solid accomplishments in some areas and extremely hopeful foreward movements in others. In a few minutes I will give you a brief accounting of some of the things I am talking about, a few items of good news that I would appreciate you passing along whenever the opportunity presents itself in bars, in barbershops or, perhaps, editorial columns.

I do this with two purposes in mind.

First, it seems to me that by any objective standards both the Office of Education and the Nixon Administration have been unfairly criticized in terms of their commitment to educational progress. I would like to do what I can to try to set this record straight.

After four months residence I can assure you that the Office has a thoroughly competent and willing staff. Some of them are new but most are not, and all are carrying forward a very difficult, very complex program with a high degree of imagination and loyalty. It is noteworthy that over the past 10 years the programs in the Office have increased from 20 to more than 100, the budget dollars from $600 million to more than $6 billion in Fiscal Year 1972, and the employees from 1,100 to 2,800.

It has become clear to me that under Secretary Richardson's leadership influence, the Administration has designed a sound and extremely hopeful educational policy, one that holds substantial promise for improving the educational opportunities of all the people of this Nation and for generations to come. It was in that context that I viewed the opportunities that persuaded me to accept the invitation. I have found no reason in the subsequent months to alter those views.

My second reason for speaking out tonight stems from my conviction that criticism of education carried to excessive lengths is immensely unproductive and potentially paralyzing. I think it is time that American education enjoyed a little success. We can stop heaping ashes on our heads in all the public places of the country. Education is doing a creditable job under difficult circumstances and we ought to begin talking about it in terms of our tremendous achievements rather than our failures.

The temper and tone of the entire debate surrounding American educational reform has degenerated alarmingly. It has become shrill, negative, and self-destructive, and has created in the public mind a stereotype of education as hopelessly fractionated, totally anachronistic, and completely unable to meet the new demands being placed upon it by an awakened, expectant society. It carries the disease of a self-fulfilling prophecy unless we stop it.

Much of the apocalyptic rhetoric has issued from the mouths of the educators themselves, though with the politicians the social scientists, the media, the freelance critics of all stripes eagerly amplifying their words. It can be argued that such attention-getting was necessary to rouse the American public from its lethargic indifference to matters of education and I am ready to agree to that in principle. I have [redacted] been a card-carrying member of the self-critical school of educators.

But there is little doubt in my mind that we have long since passed the point of productivity in our efforts to emphasize the failures of our schools, to magnify them for effect, and to offer highly colored versions to our waiting public, each of us eager to outdo the other in degree of calamity we can peddle from the podium, or hawk through journals and newsletters.

We have spent a good deal of energy uncovering the flaws of our educational system. Now I would urge that we make an even stronger effort to present the possibilities inherent in that system, accenting the positive, offering encouragement to a people very weary of defeatism, anxiety, and strife. We must not only work to solve education's problems but we must also let the American people know what we are attempting to do and we must not be shy in letting them know the measures of success we are having for they are substantial and important. We must also let it be clearly understood that if society continues to compound and increase its expectations and mandates upon the schools, it must be prepared to meet the price.

Of course there are shortcomings and weaknesses and they must be corrected, but they must be placed in perspective with many great strengths. To drift into a consensus of defeat, hearing only the loud cliches of those who would humiliate public education, for whatever reason, is to surrender the only institution that possesses the long-term cure to our social ills. In short, if the schools of American are going to rise to the expectations now thrust upon them, then there must be a very strong resurgence of faith in the schools, based on sound evidence and non-defensive testimony.

Desegregation

Why not begin with the really worthwhile progress that is being made toward ending racially segregated schooling? In the 11 Southern States, once a citadel of segregation, an extraordinary change in the structure of public education has taken place and it has happened in the past year.

In 1968, throughout the South, 68 percent of all black children attended entirely black schools. Today only about 18 percent of Southern black children

are in all-black schools. Since 1968 the number of black children is schools that are half white or more has more than doubled and today approximately 32 percent of the black children in the South attend schools which are majority white. In terms of absolute numbers and percentages, there are now more black children in majority white schools in the 11 States of the old South than in any other region of the country. The Office of Education, providing close-in technical assistance to States and localities together with the Department's Office of Civil Rights, responded to the plea for help last summer, and the changes came to pass.

The sheer size of the desegregation effort that has taken place in the South, affecting millions of minority children, has demanded special support and assistance from the Federal Government. In August of last year, as you know, $75 million was made available to help the school districts that were closing out dual systems. It was called the Emergency School Assistance Program and was designed to give quick help to districts whose regular budgets could not cover the new and expanded activities involved in successful desegregation. Slightly more than 1,300 districts appeared eligible to participate and applications were received from nearly 1,000. As of February we had funded 896 applications, turned down 51 for a variety of reasons, and were reviewing applications for the remainder of the funds.

This program has given us valuable experience that we can put to use in operating the proposed $1.5 billion Emergency School Assistance Act, the Administration's plan to give school districts throughout the Nation the help they need to end racial and cultural isolation. It seems quite obvious that without Federal help of this kind not much progress can be expected. In the

South the all-black school is virtually a thing of the past. Elsewhere in the country it appears to be a coming phenomenon, particularly in urban districts; this is a terrible new tradition taking form at a time in our history when every nerve and fiber of the Nation must be bent on achieving fairness and equality in our social institutions.

I believe the Emergency School Assistance Act can reverse this trend. If enacted, it will be the largest, most comprehensive effort by the Federal Government to end segregated schooling ever undertaken, and I would call that a major, tangible commitment of the Nixon Administration, putting its money where its mouth is.

I would add that the Administration has also moved to protect the rights of school children of other ethnic differences, an area that has been shamefully neglected in comparison with our effort toward black boys and girls. The Civil Rights Act makes no distinction between the different ethnic or national groups. Enforcement should proceed accordingly to protect the rights of the country's more than two million Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, and Cuban children as well as the terribly neglected American Indians.

HEW's Office of Civil Rights has stipulated to school superintendents that national origin issues are henceforth part of all compliance reviews and the Department has asked the districts to take affirmative action to equalize access of non-English-speaking youngsters to all educational programs. This would include testing Spanish-speaking children in Spanish rather than English, and interpreting tests with techniques that compensate for their cultural differences. One group of researchers has estimated that universal use of these new approaches would result in the reclassification of 65 to 75 percent of Spanish-speaking children as non-mentally retarded.

The approaches may vary but the important thing is that we have begun to involve ourselves effectively in the education of the non-English-speaking. We are seeking to use the Federal leverage to help solve their educational problem which is basically the same as that of all our children -- helping every youngster, whatever his home background, whatever his home language, whatever his ability -- become all he has in him to become.

Revenue Sharing

Early next week we will send to Congress what surely must be one of the most broadly considered pieces of education legislation of this or any Administration, the Education Special Revenue Sharing Act.

Twenty-five days ago, on March 8, I came here to Chicago to present our basic concept of education revenue sharing to a gathering of more than 400 educators, administrators, community leaders, poor people, parents, students, minority leaders, and citizens at large from this region -- a cross-section of those who would live with this bill and who could, we felt, make an important contribution to its formulation. Identical meetings took place in nine other cities from coast to coast.

Contributions from these meetings exceeded our fondest hopes. We gathered, as you can imagine, a mixed bag of criticism but overall it was positive and useful. Some persons expressed concern that the amount of Federal assistance their districts would receive under the new arrangement would be less than it is now. We gave them our assurances that to the best of our knowledge the shares would be the same and, in some cases, more. Others were reluctant at the thought of abandoning the special relationship with Washington that had grown up in the categorical years. Whatever the merits of that argument, I do not believe that any advantage to the districts will be lost. The

purpose of the Act is to strengthen the hands of the local districts and free them from categorical constraint and paper management, not weaken them.

But we did achieve consensus on the major point, the critical need to bring order and consistency out of the present chaos and inflexibility and inefficiency of present formula-based Federal aid to education. And our bill emphatically does that.

I know that you are all familiar with the major provisions of education special revenue sharing, so I will not recite them again for you now. However, you should know that within the last few days, the results from our 4,000-participant advisory sessions have been built into our final bill.

It is important to view education special revenue sharing together with general revenue sharing which calls for the distribution of $5 billion in new money to the States. The estimated share of this money for education, given a continuation of present practice at State level, would be $2 billion or well beyond the level of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

As made clear in our regional meetings, there will be 100 percent pass-through of funds to local agencies for the disadvantaged. "Comparability of services" will be mandated. This means that a local school district doing a good job for its disadvantaged children -- providing them with services at least equal to those received by their more fortunate comtemporaries -- will receive the Federal money as a supplementary add-on. This incentive system is a strong acknowledgement of the need to provide poor children with more support than the others, a type of discrimination in reverse. We believe that targeting the Federal money in this fashion will also spur the States and local districts to greater effort on behalf of the disadvantaged.

The new bill preserves all existing safeguards against discrimination and provides for continuing and, in fact, broadened participation of nonpublic school children in Federally supported programs conceived and executed at the State and local levels. I can say unequivocally that we have a better bill because of the help we received in drawing it up, a bill that when enacted into law, as we surely hope it will be, will preserve the large national priorities of the present Federal legislation while releasing to a far greater degree the knowledge, imagination, and creative energies of the States and communities in all their different ways in behalf of our children.

National Institute of Education

Congress also has before it an Administration proposal that would create a National Institute of Education. This organization, originally called for by President Nixon in his March, 1970 message on education reform, is intended finally to achieve a critical mass in educational research by coordinating present scattered efforts and initiating new thrusts we need so desperately.

The NIE is not -- and hopefully never would be -- easy to describe. It would be, like its subject, always in the process of becoming. It would adapt and change, as required, seeking and developing new answers to educational problems and, once having succeeded in a given area, moving on to the next and the next.

Gathered under the NIE banner would be the finest minds in their fields -- educators, psychologists, biologists, social scientists, humanists, anthropologists, -- men and women of the ability to create new ways to teach and learn, to look deeply into the learning process itself in all its physical and psychological aspects, to explore in an unfettered atmosphere of pure

invention the far reaches of man's capacity to create knowlege and transmit it.

Although we must await the action of Congress to determine the nature and scope of NIE, we are moving ahead now to develop workable solutions to some of the hard problems that must be solved before the Institute can become an operational reality. How, for example, are we to develop an administrative structure that will permit the Institute to function efficiently and yet with total creative freedom? How can we attract and hold the caliber of staff we will need and, of course, what shall they work on, and in what order? How will we relate the NIE with the Office of Education without encumbering it with the conventions of formal government?

We will have a year in which to find answers to these questions.

Higher Education

The National Institute of Education will, we hope, increase our knowledge of how we educate. Still another legislative proposal, the National Foundation for Higher Education, will apply the results of NIE's deliberations as they apply to higher education. In the broadest sense the Foundation will be a new vehicle to enable higher education to carry out the reforms and innovations required to deal with the realities of increasing enrollment and accelerating technological change.

The Foundation, called for in a companion piece to the pending Higher Education Opportunity Act, would be a device to help colleges and universities decide rationally what they want to become and, when they have organized their plans, to provide seed money to help get them underway.

This need for institutional innovation has been forcefully argued in

the Newman Report on Higher Education which stated that "The system (of higher education) with its massive inertia, resists fundamental changes, rarely eliminates outmoded programs, ignores the differing needs of students, seldom questions its educational goals, and almost never creates new and different types of institutions."

The Foundation, we hope, will help to turn that situation around by providing aid to develop new kinds of institutions as well as strengthening those we already have, and by working toward development of a national policy for higher education. That policy would, I imagine, include as its first order of business a searching examination of the Federal Government's role, if any, in the higher education enterprise in this country over the decades ahead.

The Higher Education Opportunity Act also proposes a bold plan of financial assistance for students from low-income families. The President's stated goal is that "no qualified student who wants to go to college should be barred by lack of money." As things stand, lack of money is a very effective bar. A young person from a family earning $15,000 or more annually is five times more likely to attend college than one whose family income is less than $3,000.

Four major programs administered by the Office of Education -- Equal Education Opportunity Grants, College Work-Study, National Defense Student Loans, and Guaranteed Loans -- are providing benefits to a million and a half students. The President's proposal would increase that figure by another million students, all from the lowest economic stratum.

Office of Education

The magazine article on the Office of Education that I referred to at the opening of these remarks made a particular point of the limited amount

of funds a U.S. Commissioner has at his discretion to launch his new initiatives. And it is true. In Fiscal 1971, for example, the Office of Education has had $4,660,806,000 in total program appropriations. Discretionary money totals $715,129,000, less than a sixth. Out of this money must come our total research effort, development and installation of model programs, teacher education, project grants, and the many other on-going obligations of the Office apart from formula grant programs.

Yet with this sixth, the cutting edge of our developmental effort, I believe we have begun to do some rather important things. One of them is called Experimental Schools.

Experimental Schools is not an abstract research program conducted in a paper-filled warren in the Office of Education. The schools actually exist and starting this September they and their students will help us prove or disprove a theory which says that if you try to change a whole system, from kindergarten through grade 12, all at the same time, working with perhaps 2,000 to 5,000 children, then you may be able to achieve some kind of change and some permanent reform. At least we think there will be a better chance of success. It will be a place for the lively demonstration of new and tested products of our educational research effort of the past six years.

The Office of Education last year invited school systems throughout the country to give us an idea of what they would attempt to do in such an experiment. We received 500 responses, chose eight to develop detailed proposals for five-year projects, and from those will pick the two or three systems which will begin the experiments this September, combining into a coordinated, comprehensive project many of the innovations now believed to be sound, but nowhere assembled at a single site.

Another research effort, from which we expect good results, deals with the pressing need to restructure and revitalize the curricular offerings of American high schools. We intend to show how the secondary curriculum can be made into a career education system that will fill the needs of large numbers of young people who leave the present system unfit for the only two reasonable alternatives that we should offer them -- postsecondary study or immediate, gainful employment. Most of these unschooled, unskilled youngsters are victimized by something called the general curriculum, an academic put-on, a false and feeble compromise between true vocational training and college preparatory.

We are about ready to fund the development of a career education model curriculum designed to respond to this problem by coming close to guaranteeing every student a productive place in our economic system, or in higher education. We ask that there no longer be any "in-between." We ask also that for most young people the option for higher education, or job entry, remain open as long as they wish.

Early this summer we plan to select two school systems from among the many that want to serve as models for the career education system. Simultaneously we will award a contract for the development of curriculum materials. The two systems selected will work closely with the curriculum developers and will install the new system with the opening of school in the fall of 1972.

Every child in the school system will get the same education bill of fare through the sixth grade while given the chance to examine a wide range of educational clusters such as health occupations or construction trades.

In grades seven through nine students will examine more closely clusters in which they show interest. The high school years will offer a gradually increasing focus on a family of skills so that, at the end of the 12th grade, the student will possess a salable job experience which includes a significant period of time in a work-study setting of his choosing.

Finally, I would like to mention efforts underway within the Office that have to do with how we can use our burgeoning technology to meet present and future needs of our schools. Our rather spotty record of performance in this field seems to flatly contradict our reputation as the most advanced technological society in the world. We intend to find out why.

Accordingly I have authorized unfreezing of $1.3 million in Fiscal Year "71 discretionary funds -- peeling it off the Commissioner's small bankroll -- to enable the Bureau of Libraries and Educational Technology to begin to develop the hard data we need to determine how the sophisticated new tools that are becoming increasingly available to education can best be integrated into the learning process. And how to engage teachers nondefensively in the urgent problem of increasing their professional productivity through technology.

Let me tell you about one of the more interesting technologically oriented projects we are funding:

In Alaska the Office has committed its resources to develop a two-way radio satellite hookup in cooperation with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, using an obsolete satellite for our purposes. The radio system will link teachers in remote, often poverty stricken villages with a central source of experts to improve their teaching skills. This pilot project will be tied closely to the design of an educational telecommunications system

combining various kinds of media to meet learning requirements throughout the State. And what we learn in Alaska should help us to plan communications that will mean improved teaching, improved learning, and improved living for the 50 million Americans living in the remote reaches of this country, places such as Appalachia and the Rocky Mountains which lie beyond the effective reach of existing educational broadcasting facilities, and therefore, regrettably, beyond the reach of one of the Office of Education's proudest achievements, Sesame Street.

The television series is one of our most rewarding research investments, providing sound instruction to millions of preschoolers throughout the Nation at the incredibly low cost of $1.29 per child per year. Yet many thousands of children in the USA are presently unable to see this excellent presentation. Our satellite experiments are directed at correcting this deplorable situation.

Education in America, to sum up, is on the move. We have many things to correct and strengthen but we have many more that are eminently successful.

Let us get at the work to be done, the changes to be made, the success to be carved -- and stop bewailing our shortfalls.

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